



# Her Stories

NEWSLETTER VOLUME 3

**SHE  
LEADS**



Ambasáid na hÉireann  
Embassy of Ireland



# From the Communications Desk

Welcome to another edition of the She Leads Her Stories newsletter (Volume 3).

Our cover features Honorable Susan Matsunga, who was trained under the She Leads project and won in the by-elections held this year. Have a read about her and Honorable Sichelesile Mahlangu's stories here:

<https://hivos.org/news/big-political-strides-made-during-womens-month-in-zimbabwe/>

This edition of the newsletter looks at some of the work we have been doing within the She Leads project across Zimbabwe.

On the right is Honorable Tatenda Mavetera, captured taking pictures with some participants at the #VoteRunLeadReloaded launch.



## The She Leads project

Hivos is implementing the She Leads program, which focuses on promoting the full and effective participation and leadership of women and girls in political and societal decision-making in Zimbabwe.

She Leads aims for three main results. The first is increasing women's representation and leadership positions in civic and political institutions.

Secondly, the program wants to create more space for divergent voices in public debates.

Finally, women's rights platforms, networks and alliances must become better at influencing how policies on women's participation and leadership are crafted and implemented at local, national and regional levels.

The project is supported by The Embassy of Ireland in Pretoria and we work with multiple implementing partners including Women in Leadership Development (WILD), Gender and Media Connect (GMC), Institute for Young Women Development (IYWD), General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union (GAPWUZ), Women Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCOZ) and Patsime Edutainment Trust.



# Empowering young women to get into leadership

Drawing from the various #BreakTheBias campaigns and in celebration of this year's International Women's Day which called upon everyone to take steps in ensuring a gender-equal world that protects, promotes, respects and fulfils the rights of women without prejudice, bias and any form of discrimination, the She Leads project, through the Institute for Young Women's Development (IYWD), convened policymakers, young women and women at Mayfair Lodges in Bindura.

The women shared and celebrated their acts of courage, determination and how they have played a fundamental role in transforming communities through feminist leadership and activism.

Honorable Brightness Mangora, an alumni of IYWD's #VoteRunLead program and current Member of Parliament for Marondera, saluted the sustained efforts by the women in challenging patriarchal norms, attitudes that hinder participation and advocating for policy reform.

"In order to break the bias, the historical imbalance which was created and perpetuated by harmful cultural norms, attitudes and practices, we must continue to raise awareness on the need for gender equality and advocate for Gender Responsive Budgeting. A Gender Equality Act that obliges political parties, private and all State institutions to ensure gender parity must be formulated and implemented, in line with the country's Constitution," Hon Mangora said.

Gladys Chigariro, a young woman from Bindura Rural in Mashonaland Central province, credited her grounding in feminist principles and leadership which emancipate and empower women to break the gendered stereotypes, as ingredients which saw her claiming a seat in the male-dominated traditional judiciary system, following her appointment in Chief Masembura's court as an advisor.

"I did not have the confidence of speaking in front of people, but I am grateful for the Transformative Feminist Leadership training that I attended. It groomed me into the person I am today. I can now address people with confidence and I am now representing issues that affect women and offer solutions from a woman's perspective".

In addition to being a court advisor, Gladys is currently serving as a secretary for Masembura Primary School Development Committee, a committee member for the Village Development Committee and the Ward Development Committee.

Other young women and women who were part of the celebrations emphasized the need for equal representation and leadership in civic and political positions at community



Gladys Chigariro (second left) on a panel discussion

and national levels.

Through artistic expressions, the women creatively engaged policymakers and conveyed messages on their experiences with leadership and political participation.

Speaking at the event, Sandra Zenda, IYWD's Programs Coordinator, expressed the organization's commitment to empower women.

"The narrative surrounding women and their participation in decision making positions and processes has changed over time. However, there is still a bias that still has to be confronted. In this regard, we are committed to breaking the bias through growing a feminist movement of young women and women who utilize their urgency to challenge the oppressive patriarchal systems and advocate for the formulation and implementation of progressive policies on Gender Equality. Since our inception in 2009, we have witnessed several women who are rising and taking up space in decision making positions that were once male-dominated," Sandra said.

With support from Hivos and the Embassy of Ireland under the #SheLeads program, the IYWD is designing and implementing programs that have a meaningful impact on the lives of young women and women through Transformative Feminist Leadership.

When women access opportunities, assume positions of power and participate in decisions that affect their lives, the community flourishes.



# Out and about...



Zimbabwe Gender Commission CEO, Virginia Muwanigwa, presents findings during the Inter-Party Round Table on Women's Political Participation hosted by Hivos, Institute for Young Women's Development and Zimbabwe institute.



A participant explains how she uses her phone during a Digital Safety Training Workshop



She Leads partners are taken through training activities at the Newsroom and Newsmaker Workshop hosted by GMC



# A new gender epoch for creatives



Cris Chinaka facilitating the gender-sensitive reporting workshop with online and radio personalities in Harare

Media plays a vital role in shaping perceptions of how women and men are portrayed in the eyes of communities. As part of the She Leads program, through Gender and Media Connect (GMC), online content creators (creatives) and radio personalities received training on how to report in a gender-sensitive way, and also how to mainstream gender in their work.

A two-phased training workshop was conducted for the online media and radio personalities (or socialites). The focus was to create a shift in attitudes around gender mainstreaming in their work. Commonly, socialites have a huge following on social media and everything they do or say automatically receives a great audience response. It then offers a great channel to have gender issues magnified.

Presenting at the training, Cris Chinaka referred to the ethics and standards needed when reporting in a gender-sensitive way, in which he echoed that it was media's responsibility in making equal voices heard from both men and women.

"The media should adopt a courageous attitude towards increasing the voice of women and men equally. I think the impact of this training will be greater awareness and hopefully

after that, a greater change in society. Media is an essential part of this change," Chinaka said.

Reporting in a gender-sensitive way enables an equal playing field for both women and men. Efforts such as these are another step forward towards real change and closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

Victor Tinashe Mpofu, popularly known as Doc Vikela – a creative who was also part of the training in 2021 – cited that this training had gone a long way in making a huge impact within the media and creatives sector.

"We are happy with the work that Gender and Media Connect has done through the She Leads project, working in partnership with Hivos. This training has offered insight into how we can work better," Doc Vikela said.

"We have learnt how to be gender-sensitive in our communication. All the lessons learnt will be part of our training book that will be shared with upcoming generations of comedians and content creators."

# Taking on leadership roles in Zimbabwean farms

A core aspect of our She Leads project is a focus on promoting the full and effective participation and leadership of women and girls in political and societal decision-making.

One such fitting leader is Dorothy Inusa – a multi-role holding worker at Selby Enterprises African Preserves in the Mazowe area, Zimbabwe.

She holds multiple leadership positions at the fruit and vegetable farm. Hygiene Supervisor, First Aider, Kindergarten Teacher and Women's Branch Chairperson are all roles she has taken up as she passionately represents her fellow workers at the farm.



Dorothy Inusa (centre) flanked by other members of GAPWUZ, Shelter Zhuwaki of Luxaflo Roses (left) and Ruth Makazhu from Mazowe

## A partnership pushing for better conditions

Dorothy is a member of the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ), which has been advocating for the betterment of living and working conditions for farm workers under the She Leads project.

GAPWUZ is a labor union that focuses on strengthening and supporting farm workers. A central part of the union's work is to promote and protect workers' rights through education about their rights and offering legal assistance.

"I used to refuse to be a member of GAPWUZ," Dorothy said. "This was until I was then educated on the support that they offer in case of any work-related situations and figured it would be good to join them."

## Collaborating for better conditions

Selby farm, where Dorothy works, is part of a group 12 farms in the Mazowe region where GAPWUZ members meet once a month to discuss key issues around their living and working conditions.

"We meet once a month to discuss issues and share new ideas. We discuss issues that are important to us, that we are facing and share ideas on how we can tackle each one of the issues," Dorothy said.

"GAPWUZ negotiators then help us to breakdown the issues further and understand how we can present these to management."

The concerted efforts by the employees from the 12 farms make for a collaborative approach to dealing with issues and thereby settling any arising issues in a unified manner.

## Dealing with the challenges

The process of claiming rights where they have been denied does come with various challenges. Dorothy and her fellow farm workers are in constant collision, however positive, with the human resources personnel at the different farms.

"Sometimes, we had to lie and call in sick in order to get some time off work. But through engagements with GAPWUZ, we have learnt that we could easily request time off work as it is due to us," Dorothy said.

There have been plenty other cases which the GAPWUZ team has been called in to support and Dorothy acknowledges the level of help they have received.



# “Prioritize mental health in your leadership journey”

African communities have over the years neglected both men and women leaders' mental health. Society is often concerned about the ability of a leader to execute their duties accordingly despite mental health concerns and this has led to the leadership journey becoming exhausting and overwhelming.

To cope better in one's leadership journey, one ought to take care of their emotional and mental wellness. It is important to always strike a balance between the pressure that comes with leadership responsibilities and being in an emotionally stable place.

It is under such a background that She Leads, through Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD), conducted its first Master Class for the second cohort of mentees under the WILD Leadership Mentoring School. The session on mental health, was facilitated by Dr Nombulelo T. Crocco, who is a Clinical Psychologist.

The Mental Health Master Class equipped mentees, who are charged with leadership roles in their diverse sectors, with skills on how to manage their mental health as this affects how they think, feel, and act.

Dr Nombulelo T. Crocco took the mentees through a mental health assessment test, which she said was a common method of checking if one is mentally unwell.

Following the discussion that was opened for everyone on the common myths around mental health, mentees highlighted some of the myths.

“There is a general perception that depression only affects people in first world countries; mental illness is a sign of weakness; suicide is not driven by depression but by evil spirits; there is no such thing as mental health,” said mentees.

In a bid to demystify some of the myths around mental health, Dr Crocco said that depression could affect anyone.

“We must be aware that depression affects literally anyone, regardless of their race, and financial state. I hear a lot of people say they are suffering from depression, but depression does not happen after a period of two days. It can only be deemed depression after two weeks of deep sadness mixed with other factors like lashing out, migraines, forgetfulness, sleeping disorders,” added Dr Crocco.

Dr. Crocco pleaded with mentees to prioritise their mental health and to seek for treatment whenever the need would arise.

“There is no problem in this life that cannot be addressed. Suicide should not be the first way out. We also ought to celebrate the small things in life and always be kind to people, as we don't know what they are going through,” said Dr Crocco.

Dr Crocco urged young women to speak out and open up on the issues affecting them so as to prevent mental health challenges.



Dr Nombulelo Crocco (above) presenting during the Mental Health Master Class at the WILD Leadership Mentoring School, while mentees (right) listen in.

# Congratulations Nasper Munyau

We congratulate Nasper Munyau (with microphone), who won the by-election to the position of Senator representing Persons with Disabilities in Zimbabwe.

Nasper is an alumni of the #VoteRunLeadReloaded program, which is a She Leads training facilitated by the Institute for Young Women's Development (IYWD).



## 'Future of civil society work is digital'

We are living in a fast digital world which requires the civil society community to be agile in their work so as to accommodate the fast-changing trends of the digital world. Without this adaptive measure any organization will crumble.

The Covid-19 global pandemic has changed how the world functions, illustrating the limitations of many existing systems and highlighting the need to reimagine the role of information technology as a lever for economic productivity and growth. In attempting to contain the virus, countries have established mobility restrictions and, in some cases, lockdowns, which have fundamentally disrupted the way civil society functions. This disruption has transformed the ways in which communities, businesses and individuals operate, communicate and transfer knowledge.

As a response to this shift in how organizations and individuals communicate, Gender and Media Connect (GMC), under the She Leads project, has been training She Leads partners and their beneficiaries so as to enhance the capacity of the organizations in the way they communicate their message to their stakeholders.

Using digital transformation to drive towards an organizational goal often means that an organization's operating model needs to adapt. An agile organization will achieve this by making steady, iterative steps towards its goals.

One of the trained participants, representing Patsime Trust, Sandra Mpofu, highlighted the importance of the training they received from GMC, in which she said organizations need to partner together using technology to meet the objectives of the She Leads project.

"The training we did with Gender and Media Connect has made me realize that organizations need to recognize their responsibility to use their social media platforms to spotlight and prompt action around key challenges. This can be done through digital inclusion and amplifying advocacy efforts accordingly. Partnering with like-minded organizations to combine resources, capabilities and reach is an effective way to do just that," Mpofu said.

Acquiring digital skills for civil society organizations means staying relevant and attractive to funders, ability to measure impact and the having the platform to engaging beneficiaries.



# Taking work to the communities

Mt Hampden, Stapleford is a peri-urban, informal settlement that is prevalent with cases of gender-based violence and abuse – cases which include child prostitution, child marriages and drug and substance abuse.

The women and girls in the community have mostly been marginalized, with lack of access to basic facilities. They lack basic human rights provisions such as decent shelter – as they dwell in densely populated, squalid compounds – access to health services and information, as well as participation in democratic processes.

Patsime Trust, working under the She Leads project, recently invited Centre for Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Research Zimbabwe (CeSHHAR Zimbabwe) to provide onsite clinical services such as HIV self-testing, contraceptives, screening of STI(s) and treatment.

The roadshow was developed to be both informative and practically relevant in terms of meeting some of the women's reproductive health needs in the Stapleford community.





# Outlaw harmful cultural practices to promote equal representation

The Zimbabwean government is encouraged to outlaw harmful practices and promote equal representation of women in public systems. These sentiments were raised during a session that was featured in an 11-hour-long *Twitterview* held for She Leads and facilitated by Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) and Culxure Mag in commemoration of this year's International Women's Day.

The *Twitterview* featured voices from women occupying leadership spaces in Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, from within sports journalism, Human Rights Commission, performing arts, public leadership and business.

Presenting on culture and women's participation in leadership, Andile Tshuma – a journalism instructor at the National University of Science and Technology and development practitioner – cited the need for the government to outlaw practices that deter women from participating in leadership and public life.

"[The] Government must outlaw harmful practices, systemic bias, ensure that all our existing pro-equality policies are enacted and must promote equal representation of women in public systems. [They must] craft laws that protect the rights of women and [develop] programing that supports women's initiatives," she said.

Speaking during the *Twitterview*, Permanent Ngoma – Programs Manager at WILD – explained that the work that they do as an organization seeks to encourage women's participation in political leadership.

"Our #GetTheBalanceRight campaign is aimed at amplifying women's voices and bridging the gaps that have seen women being relegated to the periphery of electoral processes. This has seen most women withdrawing from public leadership and politics. The campaign mainly targets political parties with the authority and power to redress gender power imbalances and structural barriers facing political party policies and practices on gender equality," Ngoma said.

"Laws and policies that promote gender equality send a positive message to women about their role in the country. There is also a need to ensure the implementation of policies that promote gender equality," she reiterated.

Also present for the *Twitterview*, Mumbi Namwawa – a frontline human rights defender based in Zambia – highlighted: "The journey of leadership is not easy and harder for women, but that does not mean you should not be in it."